



# Pathway To Ilm

## Monthly Article

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### The Friday Khutbah: The Importance of Attentive Listening and Silence

*Salāh*, the second pillar of Islam, is an obligatory act of worship for every Muslim to perform five times a day. The Friday (*Jumu'ah*) prayer holds a special significance in the lives of Muslims and differs from the daily prayers in its format and in the number of *rak'āts* offered. Allah ﷻ has revealed an entire *Surah* and named it *Surah al-Jumu'ah*. Within this *Surah*, there is a verse where Allah ﷻ emphasises the importance of the Friday prayer as well as the *khutbah*:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

***“O you who have believed, when [the adhān] is called for the prayer on the day of Jumu'ah [Friday], then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade. That is better for you, if you only knew”.<sup>1</sup>***

According to many scholars of *tafsir*, the word *dhikrullah* refers to both the prayer and the sermon (*khutbah*). The *khutbah* is a condition for the validity of *Jumu'ah Salāh* and is conducted before every Friday prayer as per the *sunnah* of our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. It is obligatory for Muslims to listen attentively to the *khutbah*. Additionally, it is very important for people to arrive at the Masjid before the *khutbah* starts. If they miss the *khutbah*, their *Jumu'ah Salāh* will not be recorded (i.e. diminishes the completeness and reward of the *Jumu'ah Salāh*). The angels record who arrives first until the *Imām* begins the *khutbah*. Once the *Imām* starts the *khutbah*, the angels close the register and listen to the *khutbah* themselves as the Prophet ﷺ said in a *hadith*: **“On every Friday the angels take their stand at every gate of the mosque to write the**

<sup>1</sup> Surah al-Jumu'ah: Surah 62, verse 9

names of the people chronologically (i.e. according to the time of their arrival for the Friday prayer) and when the *Imām* sits (on the pulpit) they fold up their scrolls and get ready to listen to the sermon”.<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays, it has become increasingly common to see individuals talking, using their phones, or being otherwise distracted during the *khutbah*. This poses a significant problem as it detracts from the sanctity and purpose of the *khutbah*. The *Imām*'s sermon is intended to offer spiritual guidance and reminders, requiring the undivided attention and respect of the congregation. Engaging in distractions not only reduces the personal spiritual benefits one can receive by merely listening to the *khutbah*, but also disrupts the concentration of others. It is essential for the community to recognise the significance of the *khutbah* and adhere to its rules.

The Prophet ﷺ said: **“If you tell your companion to be quiet on Friday while the *Imām* is speaking, you have spoken improperly.”**<sup>3</sup> *Imām* al-Nawawi writes that this tradition clearly prohibits all forms of talking during the sermon.<sup>4</sup> The Prophet ﷺ also said: **“Whoever performs the ablution and perfects his ablution then comes to the Friday prayer and listens attentively and remains silent he will be forgiven for everything between it and the other Friday with an additional three days and whoever touches pebbles has committed something rejected and blameworthy (*laghw*)”**.<sup>5</sup> This *Hadith* indicates that, in addition to speaking, even unnecessary fidgeting during the *khutbah* is impermissible, just as it is during prayer. If touching pebbles during the *khutbah* is considered disliked, then using cell phones for playing or texting is significantly more distracting and inappropriate.

According to the majority of scholars (*jumhoor*) ﷺ, it is obligatory (*wājib*) to listen to the *khutbah*. According to *Imām* Abu Hanifah ﷺ, from the moment the *Imām* ascends the pulpit, it becomes *wājib* to attentively listen to the *khutbah*. The evidence is based on the *Hadith* of the Prophet ﷺ: **“When one of you enters the mosque and the Imam is on the**

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<sup>2</sup> Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: 3211

<sup>3</sup> Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: 892, Saḥīḥ Muslim: 851

<sup>4</sup> Al-Nawawī, Yaḥyā bin Sharaf, Sharḥ al-Nawawī ‘Alā Muslim: 851

<sup>5</sup> Saḥīḥ Muslim: 857

**pulpit, there is to be no prayer<sup>6</sup> and no speaking until the Imam has finished”.**<sup>7</sup> *Imām* Mālik and *Imām* Ahmad ﷺ also stipulate that it is *wājib* to listen to the *khutbah*,<sup>8</sup> while *Imām* Shāfi‘i ﷺ states that it is *sunnah* to listen to the *khutbah*.<sup>9</sup>

As for talking during the *khutbah*, according to *Imām* Abu Hanifah ﷺ, it is severely disliked (*makruh tahrimi*) to speak, whether near or far, to respond to greetings, or to say 'Yarhamukallah' to someone who sneezes. Everything that is prohibited in prayer is also prohibited during the sermon, including eating, drinking, and speaking, even if it is to praise Allah ﷻ or enjoin good. Rather, one must listen and remain silent. It is forbidden to speak at all during the *khutbah* according to the *Imām* Mālik and *Imām* Ahmad ﷺ. According to *Imām* Shāfi‘i ﷺ, it is disliked (*makruh*) to talk during the *khutbah*.<sup>10</sup> In fact, *Imām* Shāfi‘i himself writes: “And I like for everyone who attends the *khutbah* to listen to it and remain silent, and not to speak from the time the *Imām* starts speaking until he finishes both *khutbahs*”.<sup>11</sup>

In conclusion, *Jumu‘ah* prayer holds a unique and vital place in Islam. The *khutbah* is not merely a customary practice but a fundamental aspect of the *Jumu‘ah Salāh*, requiring the complete and undivided attention of the congregation. Despite the growing trend of distractions during the *khutbah*, such as talking or using mobile phones, it remains obligatory according to the majority of scholars to listen attentively from the moment the *Imām* ascends the pulpit. The severity of this obligation is further highlighted by the consistent prohibitions against any form of talking, fidgeting, or distractions during the *khutbah*, as these actions diminish the rewards and benefits gained from listening to the *khutbah*. The community must therefore recognise and uphold the sanctity of the *khutbah*, adhering to its rules to fully benefit from the blessings it offers.

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<sup>6</sup> The issue of praying during the *khutbah* will be addressed in a separate article.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Ḥaythami, *Majma‘ al-Zawā'id*: 2/184

<sup>8</sup> *Badāi‘ al-Ṣanāi‘*: 1/264

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaily, *Al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatuh*: 294

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Imām* Shāfi‘i, *Kitab al-Umm*: 1/233